

## [Mrs. Mary Leakey Miles]

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Page 1 FOLKSTUFF AND FOLKWAYS [??] Words RANGE LORE.

Range Lore and

Early Experiences

Before and After 1875

EDITORIAL FIELD COPY

by

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REAL COUNTY? DISTRICT #10

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MRS. MARY LEAKEY MILES

Mary Leakey Miles, daughter of John Leakey (Lak-y) pioneer settler of the Frio Canyon and founder of the town of Leakey, is 70 years old and lived the life of the pioneer women of that day. She was born in 1867 at Leakey, Texas, and grew up in the saddle, helping her father with the stock and riding the side saddle on horses scarcely broke.

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Her father, a tall, blue eyed, red-complexioned man, feared nothing and lived dailey daily by his brawn. Old timers remember his use of profane language and tell how he pointed an empty revolver at Indians and cursed them till they fled. He ruled his household with a firm and imperious hand. Ten children of his own learned to ride, rope and shoot under his expert guidance, nor were they spared the hard-fisted rule of their father. In site of thieving Indians, the old man prospered and his children had their individual brands for their stock.

Mary Leakey was the second daughter of the family. She was a tall, blonde girl whose horseback riding was unexcelled and who remembers her horses with fondness that is a mark of those who depended on a horse, much of the time, for safety as well as toil. C12 - Texas

She married Virgle Miles in [1888?] and is the mother of 11 children. Her husband used her brand, ML for a number of years, as she already had stock running under her own brand.

Mrs. Miles resides in Uvalde on North Getty Street. Her husband died about twelve years ago and since then, she has sold her ranch holdings and is spending her old age in town. The following episodes of her life are told in her won words:

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"The town of Leakey was named for my father. He rode the first wagon trail ever up in that country and he was one of the first settlers ever to go up there. Two Ball boys and a single fellow by the name of Stamford went there with him.

"Our first house in Leakey was built by my father and his help. It was a two-room house made of cypress boards cut from native cypress trees. There was a large fireplace in one end of the house and we cooked over the fire in this fireplace. We had a hook hanging from the chimney that we hung iron pots on and we used a Dutch oven and other skillets.

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Many a good meal of fine venison steaks and hot biscuits as well as beef was cooked in that old fireplace.

"My fathe father run stock and his oldest boy was riding with him when he was so little my father had to tie him on the horse. He did this, a whole lot, on account of Indians.

"We've seen Indians on the mountains around our home. Once my brother and my sister just older than me started up on the mountain one evening. My brother was ahead of us and pretty soon he whistled and we knowed to stop so we did. My brother broke to run and then we knew there were Indians. We got back home safe but the Indians took a lot of stock that night.

"My father was shot to pieces by the Indians once when he was visiting Mr. [Anglinis?] folks over in [Sabinal?]. He and my mother had gone to spend the day over there. The Indians had come to the corral to steal horses and were run off, so my father and six or seven men went upon the mountain to trail them and he got to the top and [gave?] back for the others to come on up when the Indians shot him. He jumped off of a high bluff when he saw they had him and he fell from bush to bush, catching his way as he went down. They thought he was dead, of course, and the Indians were slipping up on him to scalp him when he grabbed his sixshooter and begun cursing them.

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He was an awful person to curse and that's how the white men knew where he was and got to him, they heard him cursing. The Indians run but they didn't know the gun was empty. At least, my father thought it was. He had another shell and didn't know it.

"We've entertained many an outlaw in our home. We didn't know who they were, for they came under different names of course. A man named Longely stayed for awhile. He was a great desperado and at one time he was to be hung but the doctor fixed it so his neck

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wouldn't break, and he got out of his coffin alive. There were saloons there and some lively times in those days. Many a thing happened that weren't ever told.

"I used to ride on the range but I couldn't rope like my sister could. That was one thing I never learned to do so well. We had brothers to do that but my sister was nearly as good. I never helped with the round-ups as much as I worked with the stock about the place. My father used to send cattle out north of there. I don't know where they went to but guess some buyer come in and taken them north.

"I've had horses run away with me and throw me too. I went on crutches a whole year from a horse throwing me and another one stepping on me. It broke some ligaments loose in my ankle someway. One horse run about a mile once and I couldn't stop him but my brother headed him off and caught him.

"Pat was my favorite horse. He was a red roan. I thought he was awful smart but of course he belonged to me. He saved me from the Indians one time. It happened between the Frio River and what we call the Spring Branch. I wasn't far from my sister when the Indians run [?] us. My sister heard the cracking of the horses' hoofs and hollered to me, 'Better go home!' and we broke and run. She went one 4 way, and I went the other because I was afraid they'd cut me off from the crossing. They were not [?] an alarm given; they would have caught and carried us off rather than have us give an alarm. They were after horses. They run us about two miles but we were riding good horses and we outrun 'em.

"My brother had one horse that was awful mean and every chance we had, we would swipe him and ride 'im to see what we could with 'im.

"My sister, Mattie , just older than me, could ride, rope and shoot as good as anybody I ever saw. I've seen her on some pretty mean horses, riding her side saddle but she could sure handle 'em. She did most of her roping when she was helping in the pens. She'd take after a yearling anywhere and run it down and catch it too. She could talk Mexican as good

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as any Mexican. She could break horses and was successful in a way. She never got her but I got hurt twice.

"I was trying to lead a horse behind the horse I was riding and and got jerked off my horse and it crippled me in the ankle again, though not so bad as when the horse stepped on me.

"The boys used to help the girls up on their horses when they rode the side saddles. You put your foot in his hand and gave a spring. It was easy to spring up. We rode to church horseback. We went in wagons too but we traveled more by horseback in the early days. I have carried my children with me horseback when I rode the side saddle. I never would ride a mans saddle till my boy was sent to France. And then I never could face to go through town that way.

"My second brother, Tom Leakey, was the best rifle and pistol shot I ever saw. I have seen him whirl his pistol with his finger in the guard and shoot ever' time the gun came over. He never missed his mark.

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He could throw things up and hit them before they could come down. He was a fine rifle shot too. He was always out on the range and once he caught a buffalo calf and brought it in alive. He caught it at the head of the canyon about 16 miles above our place. It didn't live very long; he thought he must have injured it someway when he caught it.

"I can't say which of my three brothers was the best roper, but we had a man working for us by the name of Bill [Wall?] that was the best roper on the range or in the pens I believe I ever saw. I have seen him rope many a wild cow. (We are writing experience from Uncle Bill Wall at present).

"I have had a few run-ins with bad cattle myself. There was a range bull one time that was pretty bad. We sure had to keep on the watch for him. I've seen some real bull fights in

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my day. They'd gore each other till their entrails fell out. About the worst bull fight I ever saw was between a black and white spotted one, and the other was a red one. We heard 'em coming. They were bellerin' a long ways off and when they run together, they ment business. They fought till one of 'em killed the other one. He ripped him open and his entrails fell out. They had awful keen horns and when they were mad, they'd gore nearly anything that crossed their path.

"We had mostly rail fences around our place. (Most of the rail fences in this section are cedar poles.) We had one piece of rock fence. We had to work then. We carried water, washed clothes, made soap, milked lots of cows and cooked for big outfits all the time. Anytime a person stopped and hadn't had anything to eat, it had to be got for him.

"That was a wild and unsettled country in those days. The thick cedar brakes and dense timber was a fine hide-out for men and wild animals too. Oh I've heard panthers scream across those canyons, my goodness!

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You'd think it was a woman screaming unless you knowed. My oldest boy killed one on the [head] of the Dry Frio that was the biggest one I ever saw. He had it thrown across his horse and its nose was touching the ground on one side and his tail on the other side. [Albert?] laughed and said it was the biggest panther he ever killed. I told him, ' f Of course it is: it's your first!"

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